

Good Afternoon,

I am writing to you today in regards to Pennichuck East Utility, Inc. (PEU) Docket #DW20-156 through which PEU has requested yet another rate increase to Litchfield (and other) residents.

My family moved from Manchester, NH to Litchfield in March of 2016. We had a new construction home and once the weather warmed up, were tasked with growing grass on the approximate 1/2 acres of our property that is undisturbed. We were shocked when we received our first water bill in excess of \$400. This was for one month of watering our lawn, without an irrigation system, for an hour or so a day. We paid this because we had no choice if we wanted to have any grass at our new house, but in the subsequent years we have decided that the monthly cost is not worth the green lawn. Now that we are more or less paying for regular daily water use (no lawn watering, minimal garden watering in the spring/summer) our MONTHLY rate is just about equal to our QUARTERLY rate paid in Manchester where we had an irrigation system. I must also note that our Manchester rate included city sewage and here in Litchfield we have a private septic.

Now, I am not ignorant enough to not understand that comparing Manchester public water to PEU isn't exactly apples to apples. I only use the aforementioned example to emphasize the disparity in cost for a basic necessity, one that most would expect to be at least somewhat affordable. And Manchester public water aside, we here in Litchfield are still paying MUCH more than other suburban towns using the SAME service provider.

We have seen rate increase after rate increase and more recently have even been asked to retroactively pay for an increase. At what point does this stop? How many people in town need to speak up before someone, somewhere, with any kind of authority will recognize that Litchfield residents are being hosed? I understand that business expenses drive costs up, and ultimately the customer will pay for that somehow, but how far can they reasonably be allowed to go with this? Apparently as high as PEU wants, or so it seems. We are stuck in what is more or less a monopoly. What other options do we have? We were one of the lucky ones in that we did not have a well and were not forced into making a switch to PEU due to the St. Gobain contamination. But being that putting in a well would be our only alternative, and we can't do so due to the contamination, we are stuck paying whatever PEU wants us to until someone with the proper authority steps up and does something about this.

PEU thinks that they can put a 20%+ rate hike in front of us, maybe get some push back, and then settle on something a bit lower and we all are going to sit back and feel like winners because we fought the rate and won. That is not the case. A 1% increase at this point is unreasonable for the quality of water and service that we receive. My family has been drinking bottled water ever since we moved here, first because the water smells like chemicals and later because of what we have learned about PFOAs. That is also not to mention the fact that you never know what color water you are going to get. And it is always because they are "flushing the hydrants." We all know that is not always the case. As I mentioned previously, water is a basic necessity. No one paying what we are paying should have to skip tub night with the kids because of the color of their water. But this happens across our town all the time, amongst many other examples.

Litchfield residents are fed up. It is so frustrating to pay that bill every month feeling like our hands are tied. We want to see a change and we implore you to hear our words and put a stop to this practice.

Thank you for your time,

M. Costello
13 Hamel Circle
Litchfield, NH